

The Results Coaching Paraphrasing Guide

This guide is designed to support you as you elevate paraphrasing as an essential skill in your tool kit. It aims to demonstrate understanding, capture the core of what the speaker is expressing, and provide clarity to enhance communication.

PREPARATION

The success of any communication is 80 percent preparation. This stage is about intentional reflection—taking the time to clarify what you truly want your paraphrase to convey.

- **Maintain a mindset of positive intent:** Mindfulness is the intentional pause to ensure you are presuming the best of the person and the situation.
- **Manage internal and external distractions:** This is a reminder to quiet the noise from within and without. It is the decision to be fully present.

FULL PRESENCE

At this pivotal moment, your choice determines the trust and safety you can build together. In this stage, you bring your whole self—fully seeing, fully hearing—all of it.

- **Choose to be fully present:** I choose. This is a full commitment to “be” with the person.
- **Listen for what the speaker wants:** This is the moment to listen beyond the words—to hear the deeper meaning and underlying need. The following attributes will help guide your understanding of shaping a meaningful paraphrase.
 - Emotion, passion, and energy (including any shifts)
 - The words and language the person uses
 - Potential and possibility
 - What’s already working
 - Story and metaphor
 - Contradictions

PARAPHRASE

Based on what you have witnessed from the client, you offer a reflective statement that is brief and succinct and conveys the essence of what the client said.

- **Use their words or your own to demonstrate understanding:** Recapping or paraphrasing using the client’s own words demonstrates that you have fully received their message, helping them feel seen and heard and showing genuine curiosity. Inviting the client to explain the words they use can further evoke awareness and deepen understanding.
- **Be tentative as to what is the truth (subjective) versus the Truth (objective):** Stay in the space of possibility rather than assuming certainty about what the client is saying. Ask yourself, “Is this a lowercase-t or capital-T truth for them?” When a person holds a truth in lowercase, it often reflects a belief or value they may be open to exploring or revisiting. In contrast, a capital-T truth suggests a deeply held conviction—something core to their identity or worldview that they may be less willing to question.
- **Understand who the client is or wants to be as well as what the situation is:** Remember that it’s about the person (who) as much as it is about the topic (what).

CONFIRMATION

In coaching, confirming while paraphrasing aligns with the standard of *partnering*, which is a consistent attribute of the International Coaching Federation's (2025) Core Competencies of coaching. As an element of paraphrasing, confirmation shows a coach's intent to understand fully what the client has said. It replaces the interpretation of meaning with the accuracy of meaning.

Confirming is *not* necessary for every single paraphrase. At times, silence may best serve the client after you have offered a paraphrase. The client responds based on what they have heard, be it verbally or through body language. The point is to remember that your response holds the potential to directly impact the other person's thinking and feelings. Confirm, when necessary, to:

- Verify accuracy
- Understand instead of interpret
- Demonstrate partnering

REFERENCE

International Coaching Federation. (2025, September 8). *2025 ICF Core Competencies*. Author. Accessed at <https://coachingfederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/icf-cs-core-competencies-2025.pdf> on October 27, 2025.